

Could integrating development education into adult and community education create more space for critical adult and community education in Ireland

NATASHA BAILEY, AONTAS, NATIONAL ADULT LEARNING ORGANISATION

Abstract

From 2008-2009 the author was commissioned by AONTAS in partnership with Irish Aid¹ to carry out a piece of research which aimed to examine how there could be a strategic focus on the integration of development education, or incorporating a global dimension to learning, into adult and community education in Ireland. It also examined whether or not its usefulness as a process for active global citizenship could be employed as a message to promote development education to adult and community educators.

As part of that research, the author investigated the theoretical debates about the purpose of each practice explored in the research, active citizenship, development education and adult education. These debates hold ramifications for curricular integration and learning outcomes. These debates are particularly relevant during a time in Ireland when many academics and practitioners are asking what impact a human capital emphasis in adult education is having on the content and methodology of adult learning opportunities. Is there room for development education in an adult education process that, according to the prevailing policy zeitgeist in Ireland, should focus on the development of skills for the labour market? Could the integration of development education into adult learning opportunities in Ireland help to widen the space for adult and community education, which promotes participatory democratic agency and seeks to combat inequality?

1 The Irish Government's programme of assistance to developing countries.

This article will present the key theoretical trends in relation to each practice.

Finally, the overlaps between the three practices are scoped. The overlaps between the three practices are presented under a liberal/humanist framework and then a justice/ critical framework. The article concludes that integrating a justice approach to all three practices can retain a critical space for adult learning and could have powerful outcomes for the individual and collective development of learners, fostering a diverse array of skills as well as active global citizenship. This overlap is demonstrated through a detailed analysis of one of the case studies done for the research, giving a real life example of the integration of a justice approach to development education, adult education and active citizenship.

Introduction

In 2007, the Government's White Paper on Irish Aid stated that, "Every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to be aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and their potential to effect change for a more just and equal world" (Irish Aid, 2007).

This commitment necessitated a strategic focus on the provision of development education, or taking a global dimension to learning, in the context of adult and community education. While there are a number of existing opportunities for adults to engage in development education in Ireland, to date a strategic focus on adult learning at both State and development education sector as a whole, has been missing.

From 2008-2009 the author was commissioned by AONTAS in partnership with Irish Aid to carry out a piece of research which aimed to examine how there could be a strategic focus on the integration of development education into adult and community education in Ireland. It also examined whether or not its usefulness as a process for active global citizenship could be employed as a message to promote development education to adult and community educators. The latter was focused on as fostering civic competence and active citizenship are strategic goals for both Irish and European policies on adult education (Commission of the European Communities, 2005; Government of Ireland, 2000).

The aims of this paper are to:

- Present literature reviewed for the research, which set out the competing explanations of the purposes of the three practices explored in the research: **active citizenship; adult and community education, and development education.**
- Show the theoretical overlaps in these competing explanations and the adult learning spaces that these overlaps point to as appropriate for an integration of development education into adult learning.
- Introduce adult and community educators not familiar with development education to it and present some rationale as to why they might integrate it into their work with learners.

The debates considered in the literature presented in this paper are particularly relevant during a time in Ireland when many academics and practitioners are asking what impact a human capital emphasis in adult education is having on the content and methodology of adult learning opportunities. The literature prompts the following questions. Is there room for development education in an adult education process that, according to the prevailing policy zeitgeist in Ireland, should focus on the development of skills for the labour market? Could the integration of development education into adult learning opportunities in Ireland help to widen the space for adult and community education, which promotes participatory democratic agency and seeks to combat inequality?

The paper argues that if a critical or justice approach to all three practices was taken space could be created for adult learning, which could increase participants' critical awareness of and action on global issues, but also contribute to the realisation of different social justice agendas nationally by empowering learners, if they chose to do so, to become active critical cosmopolitan citizens. A case study from the research is presented to illustrate what this critical overlap looks like in the provision of adult and community education in Ireland. We first turn to a brief theoretical exploration of each practice – active citizenship, adult and community education, and development education – all of which are hotly contested terrains in the literature.

Active Citizenship

Active citizenship simply refers to the enactment of citizenship rights and responsibilities. It refers to taking action as a citizen. However, there are different ideas surrounding what skills that capacity should entail, and what physical boundaries one's citizenship relates to. In Ireland, and at EU level active citizenship is a current goal for decision-makers and many civil society organizations. The Irish Government set up the Taskforce on Active Citizenship in 2006 to make recommendations about fostering "civic spirit and active participation" in Ireland². There are generally considered to be four underlying theories of active citizenship: liberal; critical, communitarian; critical, and cosmopolitan (see Task Force on Active Citizenship, 2007; Khoo, 2006):

Liberal thinking about active citizenship refers to a legal contract between an individual and the State. In return for legal citizenship³ to a particular nation and protection of personal freedoms the individual upholds certain responsibilities such as voting, paying taxes, and participating in consultations. The emphasis is on the well-behaved citizen engaging in thin forms of citizenship being left to make personal choices as long as they do not violate the rule of law in their country. It is individualistic.

Communitarian active citizenship emphasises the notion of an individual citizen having a responsibility to work towards the collective good of their communities. This responsibility can be realized through volunteering or participating in community activities. However, they act within a pre-defined understanding of what a 'good society' is without necessarily questioning it.

Critical active citizens recognize that while we have an entitlement to citizenship rights, those rights may not always be upheld for disadvantaged groups in society, and members of those groups may not have access to or have been denied the skills needed to participate in democracy. Therefore, a critical active citizen is concerned with how marginalised groups of people have a differential access to the exercise of power in society. They are concerned with questioning how social, political and economic arrangements maintain these inequalities. Therefore, they may become involved in protesting decision-makers, campaigning, community development and working to ensure those who have unequal status develop and use their voice to protest their inequality and demand that their rights be vindicated.

2 See www.activecitizen.ie.

3 In other words, the person must have been granted citizenship of a country either through birth or a naturalization process.

The three concepts of citizenship described above are not mutually exclusive, but are sometimes critiqued because they depend on the legal status of citizenship. Because of this feature, rights and responsibilities of citizens can vary from nation to nation. Those inside national boundaries without citizenship may be denied the accordant rights and responsibilities. Moreover, the legal rights protected by citizenship may not ensure protection of universal human rights for all people inside the jurisdiction (Ravazzolo, 1995).

In contrast the fourth underlying theory refers to a **Cosmopolitan** understanding of active citizenship. This speaks to the idea that we are all citizens of the world entitled to those universal human rights articulated in the UN Convention and that we all need to work to ensure that those rights are vindicated for all citizens of the world (Tanner, 2007). It is a critical form of citizenship. The values associated with a **critical cosmopolitan citizenship** include, solidarity, empathy, respect, social justice and equality.

Each way of thinking about active citizenship is informed by a different way of thinking about democracy. In the case of a liberal or communitarian citizenship democracy is about having representatives who you vote for and who you trust or lobby to represent your interests. A critical citizenship is founded on the notion of participatory democracy or a situation where everyone has the right to be heard about what they think the common good is and what decisions should be taken to maintain it.

In Ireland, the global dimension of active citizenship has not been given due consideration by key stakeholders guiding policy development. The Task Force on Active Citizenship Report gives only scant consideration of this feature. The Democracy Commission in their case for democratic renewal in Ireland does not mention the global dimension of citizenship at all (The Democracy Commission, 2005).

Some say that confining active citizenship to the liberal or communitarian concepts puts us in danger of losing the capacity to be critical about how the human rights of people in our own countries and throughout the world are not equally maintained (Ravazzolo, 1995). Therefore, we play a part in maintaining inequality globally, because we are not critical of the way in which our actions, and those of governments, business and powerful organizations negatively affect others here at home and in other parts of the world.

The liberal and communitarian concepts may not take into account the ways in which citizens in the state and the world may have differential access to the status, feeling and practice of citizenship and that action may need to be taken to rectify this (Osler, 2004). Within a critical cosmopolitan understanding of active citizenship such actions as protesting and campaigning are seen as essential and necessary forms of active citizenship. Many reflect that within the liberal and communitarian concepts a citizen who is extremely critical of the state is perceived as disobedient (Khoo, 2006).

A critical citizenship is seen by some as essential to combat the pervasiveness of neoliberalism, an ideology that places the market as the organising force for human existence and devalues non-market spheres such as public schools, trade unions and civil society organisations.

Giroux asserts that, in the face of neoliberalism, governments abscond from their obligation to protect the public good and become critical of citizens who demand they maintain that requirement. He contends, “As markets are touted as the driving force for everyday life, big government is disparaged as either incompetent or threatening to individual freedom, suggesting that power should reside in markets and corporations rather than in governments and citizens” (Giroux, 2004, online paper).

Giroux further asserts that the way to challenge this position is to foster a critical citizenry who demand that government reassert a truly democratic society. Research shows that adults would like citizenship education. Ceccini refers to a survey in which nine out of 10 people in Ireland supported the provision of life-long learning that includes active citizenship (Ceccini, 2003). In contrast to a primary and secondary education system in Ireland that provides some citizenship education for children, there is a gap between the institutional commitment to adult citizenship education and actual compliance with that commitment in the day-to-day provision of adult and community education (ibid.).

We now turn to key theoretical debates surrounding the purpose of adult and community education.

What is the Purpose of Adult and Community Education?

Maunsell et al. (2008) indicate that there is no master concept of 'lifelong learning' in Ireland and recommend that one is developed. In Ireland, adult and community education is part of lifelong learning provision, which embraces a belief in the need for humans to learn throughout the life course and develop competences for personal development, social and civic engagement and employment (Government of Ireland, 2002) The main purposes of adult/community education are set out below.

Adult education for the development of human capital sees adult/community education as purely for the development of workers for the economy. This instrumental view of adult/community education focuses on the development of vocational skills for the workplace (Baptiste, 2001; Finnegan, 2008). The citizen is understood as worker, consumer and client.

Adult education as personal development or leisure activities suggests that individuals joins adult learning opportunities for the development of soft skills or personal enjoyment. This personal development view of adult/community education focuses on adults returning to learning for personal enjoyment and the development of self-esteem, and well-being (see Grummel, 2007). This citizen can be potentially be seen a consumer of entertainment through leisure learning whose social capital should be fostered through education but not critical analysis skills⁴. This purpose embraces a liberal model of adult learning.

Adult education as transformation towards a more equal society proposes adults return to learning because they were denied their first chance for learning due to social and economic disadvantage. In this radical or collective view of education adult learners critically analyse the disadvantage they have experienced and gain the skills and awareness to individually and collectively address their exclusion. Equality, social justice, solidarity and empathy are values associated with this approach. This citizen is educated for meaningful interaction in participatory democracy.

Community education is a type of adult education that merits separate consideration. It is seen by the State and providers as a distinct form of adult learning, which focuses on engaging disadvantaged individuals in education that enhances learning, fosters empowerment and civic contribution using a dis-

4 This is not to say that this type of learning may not offer an important route back into learning for those who are educationally disadvantaged.

tinct methodology. The emphasis is on community based local groups taking responsibility for co-ordinating courses, negotiating curriculum and choosing tutors as opposed to a provider imposing these in a local area. Notably, there are also competing purposes for community education as set out below.

Community education as a service in a community sees it as provided by a range of providers, but not of the community and solely for individual personal development and empowerment.

Community education as preparation for community development and social change ensures that education grows out of the community's needs and wants. In this way of thinking about community education, provision is firmly entrenched in the principles and practices of community development and is for the critical purpose described in the latter understanding of adult education, employing participative, action-oriented methodologies (AONTAS, 2004).

Again, these concepts of adult and community education are not mutually exclusive but depending on the emphasis in the policy document or provider ethos each may give priority to different outcomes. Much research has noted a predisposition on the part of European governments to place higher value on adult learning that enables the labour market progression of individuals (Ceccini, 2003). When this focus holds sway, certification and measurable learner outcomes and targets in relation to the development of skills for work are prized. Learners are seen as human capital for economic growth (Faul, 2007). The literature indicates that there are many reasons to avoid a purely instrumental view of adult learning, such as: the need to foster social capital through adult learning (*ibid.*); ensuring that all groups are targeted for lifelong learning, not just those who are seen as economic actors, and a requirement to acknowledge education's "central role in educating people to deny, challenge, or ignore local and global injustice" (Lynch, 2004, 144).

If adult learning was seen as a process that brought the above aims to the centre different outcomes from the education process would need to be valued, acknowledging that a focus on quantitative targets and certification, "are not effective proxies for...or drivers of the desired behaviours that would make a qualitative difference to education" (Faul, 2007, 11).

Giroux (2004) also argues against an education system that reduces "agency to the obligations of consumerism" by cutting the connection between education

and social change. He asserts that, “democracy necessitates forms of education that provide a new ethic of freedom and a reassertion of collective identity as central preoccupations of a vibrant democratic culture and society” (ibid.).

We now turn to an exploration of the theoretical terrain in relation to development education.

Development Education

Academics, educators and civil society organisations also debate the purpose and definition of development education. Moreover, the appropriate terminology used to describe the process is also contested. The main ways of describing the purpose of development education can be summarised thus:

Development education as a process for ensuring public moral support of a government’s or organisation’s programme of giving to, usually, Southern or ‘Third World’ countries for growth or modernisation. In this process, individuals learn about the ‘problems’ of other countries and are asked to give to agencies working in those countries (Kenny and Malley, 2002). Typically, in this way of thinking about the purpose learners are asked to give uncritically and may not explore how their own behaviour or their state’s actions have impacted on the well-being of people in other nations. People in other countries and the nations themselves may be seen as ‘less developed.’ Development is seen in terms of human rather than social capital.

Development education as a process for raising people’s awareness about global issues and to promote campaigns. This process may facilitate critical engagement about development issues and motivate individuals to help. However, it does not call them to be critical of the ways in which help is offered and may ask learners to adopt an already defined idea of the good society as opposed to asking them to define it. The above approach and this one are usually described as part of a soft, charity approach, although this process does move the learner to actions beyond donating money (Andreotti, 2006).

Development education as a process for understanding, how people and countries are interdependent, the global nature of inequality and the development of the skills necessary to enact change to address global social injustices. In this way of thinking about development education learners are involved in critically analysing why other countries are ‘under-developed’, as well as how some countries are prevented from developing social capital by our own and

our state's actions. It asks us to look at the global nature of poverty and inequality and to consider how human rights are vindicated differentially around the world. It helps learners to develop the skills need to engage in active global citizenship. It also fosters critical thinking about the types of development aid and interventions in existence and to protest those that are seen to be inappropriate.

Again, as with adult and community education and active citizenship, these ways of thinking about development education are not mutually exclusive. In fact, many see that the latter two are historical evolutions of the first. However, Ireland has a strong tradition of giving to church organisations carrying out development work in southern countries that, in the past, operated according to a soft, charity approach.

Today, development education generally aspires to both the process and the content of a set of learning activities towards the latter purpose described above. The literature also shows that it operates out of a clear set of values. There are also many adjectives to describe the process and many other types of education that may touch on development education. The figure below gives a summary of the process, topics, values and adjectives for development education (see Bourne, 2003 and Marshall, 2007).

Figure 1: Development Education

Process/ Values	Content	Adjectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development theory • Freirean methodologies • Experiential, participative learning • Learner-centred – starts where learners are at • Action-oriented for social change • Teaches and engages critical social analysis • Rights-based (from International Declaration of Human Rights) • Research and information processing • Debate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas development • Women's issues • Human rights • Health • Environmental issues/ Water • Children • Agriculture • Income generation • Debt • Globalisation • Sustainability • Fair Trade • Racism • Self-reliance • Trade justice • Famine relief • Arms trade • Interdependence • Housing • Land • Asylum seekers/ refugees • Development aid • HIV/ Aids • Conflict resolution • Food security • Interculturalism • Political prisoners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global education • Global dimension to learning • Global citizenship education • International education • World studies • Human Development in a Global Context • Education for international understanding⁵ <p>Also brought into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Education • Citizenship Education • Human rights Education • Intercultural Education • Education for Sustainable Development • Environmental Education • Peace Education • Media Studies
<p>Works from the Values of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social justice • Equality • Respect • Human dignity • Human rights • Empathy 		

5 For further consideration of debates in regard to terminology see Marshall, H. "The Global Education Terminology Debate: exploring some of the Issues." In Hayden, M et al (Eds). Sage Handbook of Research in International Education. Sage: UK

What are the overlaps between Adult and Community Education, Active Citizenship and Development Education?

In order to assess the overlaps between the three practices and to investigate to what extent they can have matching purposes the information from the previous sections is synthesised into a description of all three practices under two different philosophical frameworks. Each of the practices can be unpacked from liberal/humanist or justice/critical understanding. For instance, the human capital approach to adult education and the learning for leisure approach both fit within a liberal/ humanist understanding, which is focused on the importance of individual rights. The service community education approach and liberal and communitarian concepts of active citizenship also fit into the first framework as do the public moral support and global awareness approaches to development education. The rest of the approaches explored within the three practices align to the critical/ justice framework, which sees them as contributing to the achievement of a fundamentally different society, redistributing power to those who do not have it and fostering collective action for equality.

Figure 2: Approaches to Active Citizenship, Adult/ Community Education and Development Education

	Liberal/ Humanist	Justice/ Critical
Citizenship	A communitarian approach, individuals should make a contribution to the collective good, ie volunteering. May not critically examine how some do not have equal access to participation in civic life. Focus on obedient citizen.	Critical citizenship based on human rights and responsibilities. Fosters skills for participation for all out of a recognition that some do not have equal opportunities to participate in democracy. Advocates action for social change whether it is critical of decision-makers or not. Takes the side of those who do not have power
Adult/ Community Education	Learner-centred – the learner returns to learning to satisfy personal goals be they the development of hard or soft skills. Current emphasis on development of vocational skills for personal advancement.	Learner and collective-centred employing Freirean methodologies and a concern for radical social change. Fosters learning as a site for analysing and resisting inequality. Fosters critical analysis for social change and individual and collective empowerment
Development Education	Not uncritical about development processes in other countries or interdependence. Learner asked to take action by supporting existing campaigns. Does not seek to foster citizen's own critical analysis.	Employing Freirean methodologies and human rights, fosters idea that we are interdependent and should play an active role in changing unjust social structures that cause global inequality, poverty and injustice. Fosters critical analysis and skills to take action for a more just world, including campaigning and protest

What we can see from the above figure is that there is an overlap of purposes between the three practices under each philosophical heading. In the liberal tradition the overlaps include some attention to the common good and person-centredness and that action should be taken to enhance it. However, there is an individual focus shared by the liberal tradition that focuses on relying on the individual to make personal choices or changes.

In the justice/ critical framework a great deal of overlap can be seen between the three practices in terms of the importance of critical analysis and recognition of inequality. The emphasis is on fundamental social change and a resistance to the status quo. The process shared in adult and community education and development education in this framework is a Freirean methodology that is participative. In this understanding of active citizenship and development education there is an emphasis on taking action to achieve equality and social change. The justice approaches to all three practices share the values of equality, social justice, solidarity, empathy and respect for human rights.

Increasingly, development organisations and other stakeholders are seeing development education as a process for facilitating active global citizenship. Many large development organisations such as Oxfam and Concern have begun to call development education ‘global citizenship education’. The *Maastricht Global Education Declaration* – a strategy for improving and increasing global education to 2015 states the importance of citizens being educated to *interact critically with our global society as empowered global citizens. This poses fundamental challenges for all areas of life including education* (Europe Wide Global Education Congress, 2002).

Much of the literature speaks to the effectiveness of development education in fostering the knowledge and skills necessary to be a global citizen:

Development education has a valuable role to play in contributing to a new broader, more inclusive understanding of active citizenship, which acknowledges the global responsibilities of individuals and communities (Osler, 1994, 4).

There is also acknowledgement within adult education literature that citizenship has a global dimension (Ceccini, 2003). Exploring the global dimension to citizenship through development education does not just foster citizens who take action internationally but has the potential to support engagement in the national and local context too, “Development education is a way of helping us

to create knowledge about ourselves, and the consequences of our actions. It can help us to understand our own lives in the global context – and to re-evaluate our lives against what is endured/enjoyed elsewhere” (Fincham, 2005, 4). Many authors agree that the foundation for education towards global citizenship is the universality of human rights expressed by the United Nations.

The understanding of development education as a process for active global citizenship is aligned with the descriptions of development education and active citizenship given in the critical tradition set out above. It follows that the approach to adult education needed to integrate these practices into adult learning would also need to be aligned to the same framework. Why would and how could adult or community educators seek to take a critical approach to these three practices in their work? This question is considered in the next section.

Why Integrate Development Education into Adult and Community Education?

Development education can help adult and community education in meeting strategic commitments at a European level. The Commission has set out eight key competences that should be fostered through lifelong learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). They are compared in Figure 3 against what some of the literature posits as the outcomes of development education for adults.

Figure 3: Outcomes of Development Education

EU Competences	Development Education Outcomes
Communication in the mother tongue;	Knowledge about systems and societies that a nation trades with in order to implement fair business behaviour;
Communication in the foreign languages;	Self-directed learning and problem solving (Toepfer, 2003.);
Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;	Understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity;
Digital competence;	Understanding the global employment market (Scottish Executive, 2003);
Learning to learn;	Coping skills for rapid change;
Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence;	Social literacy to work with others to address global issues (White, 2004);
Entrepreneurship; and	Making connections between different contexts and situations (Osler, 2004);
Cultural expression.	Research and debating skills;
	Campaigning and protest;
	Critical analysis of complex social issues – ability to connect single events to systemic arrangements, and
	Making value judgements (Rost, 2004)

The importance of North/South solidarity (Naidoo, 2004), the need to tackle social exclusion on a global level (Najmudin, 2004) and enhancement of community cohesion (Scottish Executive, 2003) are all rationale for ensuring adults have the opportunity to learn about development issues.

The following case study from the research demonstrates how the integration of a critical approach to development education, adult and community education and active citizenship resulted in some of the outcomes considered above.

Moyderwell Adult Education Centre

The Adult Literacy and Basic Education Group in the Moyderwell Adult Education Centre in Tralee, County Kerry is provided under the auspices of the Kerry Education Service or Kerry VEC. This group is a case study in how the desire to gain knowledge and skills for active citizenship can be a progression from an exploration of global issues.

In 2004 this group of ten participants came together to improve their literacy skills. In order to achieve this aim the tutor offered them a development education course with the following aims:

- To provide adult literacy learners with an opportunity to improve reading and writing skills.
- To introduce development education issues and themes in order to develop a broader world view and learn about different countries and cultures.

Using the NALA *Worldwise* resource, the course covered issues like poverty, inequality and injustice. Learners were challenged about their perceptions and asked to make connections between poverty, injustice and world conflicts. Some of the students were from RAPID areas in Tralee. These are socially excluded communities in Tralee and are being targeted for poverty reduction and social inclusion interventions. They made connections between their own marginalisation and those of others around the world and “*started to see themselves in a different way*” (course tutor).

After completing the development education content in 2006 the tutor consulted with the learners about what they wanted to do next. “*They wanted to continue to develop and learn about what they had learned in the course. I think they wanted to look further at their responsibilities, they saw themselves as more of a community and wanted to learn more about their world and their place in it*” (course tutor).

The tutor suggested a range of possible activities and the one chosen was a voter education project encompassing the Vincentian Partnership Voter Education Programme since it was an election year and many in the group had never exercised their vote. This project involved the tutor and the group brainstorming a number of possible actions that the group could take collectively. The participants themselves came up with and engaged in the following:

- Adopted a little boy from Lesotho and held a coffee morning with a raffle through which they fundraised for the boy.
- This coffee morning was a fundraising event at which students showed a video about child labour.

- Before the general election students held another coffee morning and displayed a Wall of Issues which were photographs of what they felt to be important local and national election issues.
- With the tutor's assistance they wrote and performed a play called "*Standing at the Crossroads*" about a first time voter with literacy difficulties. This play was performed in a variety of places including for the Lord Mayor in Dublin.
- The group made contact with their local politicians and visited a local TDs clinic.
- The group visited the Dail.

After this the group went on to do a FETAC module entitled *Living in a Diverse Society* which had, by its very nature a development education component. In addition to the planned outcomes for participants for all the learning such as the improvement in literacy skills the group also gained:

- Improved technological skills (as they had to learn to use digital cameras for the Wall of Issues).
- Ability to critically reflect rather than just focusing on acquisition of literacy skills.
- Self-directed learning.
- Ability to organise information into dramatic form.
- Improved communication skills, and.
- A broader world view.

It is the contention of the tutor that the broader worldview facilitated by the development education activities made it possible for the participants to see themselves as citizens and facilitated them to see the voter education project as something that was relevant to them. In other words, the case presented here shows how critical development education can facilitate those who have little access to the political process to gain the skills and confidence necessary to contribute to participatory democracy.

It is clear that participation in the activities described above resulted in learners becoming active citizens. It appears that these actions encompassed a critical global citizenship where learners not only increased their participation in existing avenues for action, but were sometimes critical of them. In some cases, they came up with alternative arrangements for democratic participation or acting to address human rights injustices internationally. The actions specified in the case studies are wide-ranging and are not confined to voting or volunteering. It is also clear that the development education engaged in was critical in that it asked learners to explore injustice and to critique it. It is obvious that the approach to adult learning here embraced a transformative purpose as learners analysed their own experiences of inequality and collectively addressed them through the activities they engaged in which sought to raise awareness about literacy and the challenge of engaging in participatory democracy as a result.

Conclusion

In the literature reviewed above we saw how a critical or justice approach to all three practices explored in the research allowed for projects that sought to address issues of inequality and foster actions for fundamental change to structures that cause or support inequality. Both the case study presented here and the exploration of the literature suggests that including a global dimension to learning that critiques injustice and fosters critical analysis creates a space for adult learning that can have transformative impacts at both the individual and collective levels for learners. This critical space quite naturally leads to forms of active citizenship which go beyond voting and volunteering and lead to learners acting against their own and other's inequality which is at the heart of Freirean adult learning. At the critical end of the continuum the three practices are mutually reinforcing, thus widening a space for this approach to learning.

What is also clear is that taking a critical approach to all three practices – active citizenship, adult and community education and development education – can also have the added benefit of resulting in a sense of agency for learners that can actually assist the achievement of other learning outcomes included the strategic commitments for lifelong learning at European level. In other words, taking a critical approach can increase relevance and interest for learners, ensuring their commitment to the learning. This outcome can only be of value to educators' who are interested in ensuring that they maintain the engagement of their learners and assist them to achieve their goals.

Recalling Ceccini's (2003) research, integrating development education can also help meet Irish adults' stated desire for citizenship education. It can also hold a space for adult learning that is radical and critical. The case study and the research showed that it is a simple project to integrate development education using a critical approach into educational opportunities like the one presented in the case study, where curriculum can flow from the daily experience of learners and the tutor can make local and global connections with those themes.

The ideas presented here are part of a much larger piece of research. For those who would like to read the full research report go to www.aontas.com.

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